

Lived experience

The lived experience of a person with mental illness or psychological distress - and that of their carers, families and supporters - is to be **recognised and valued as experience that makes them valuable leaders and active partners** in the mental health and wellbeing service system.

Recognise and value that people are the experts in their own lives: Ask people what they need and want, and provide appropriate supports to enable communication and decision making. See dignity and autonomy principle.

Seek and learn from complaints and feedback: Make sure complaint and feedback processes are culturally safe and trauma informed. Offer as much choice and support as people would like or need - for example, choices to make a complaint to the service or the Commission, to involve support people including lived and living experience or First Nations workforce, or to make anonymous complaints.

Learn from consumers, carers and families: Actively encourage, support and pay current and former service users for their input into service design, delivery and improvement activities. Offer information, orientation and training, and opportunities to develop leadership capabilities.

Ensure systemic improvement activities are safe for First Nations and multicultural consumers, carers and families and people with diverse gender and sexuality. For example, seek advice from relevant organisations or designated roles within your service about how to ensure engagement is safe and respectful. Seek diverse input to make your service as safe and accessible for everyone as possible.

Support and value the lived and living experience workforce: Be curious about what you can learn from the lived and living experience workforce, give time and space for collaboration, and be guided by lived and living experience workforce about how you can support and enable their work. Identify and acknowledge power imbalances and use practical strategies to address these - for example, including more than one lived and living experience staff member in teams, groups or pieces of work.

Share or give up power: Identify who isn't in the room (including whether diverse perspectives are included) and make changes accordingly. **Identify activities and projects that are not currently but could be led by lived and living experience workforce and/or specific perspectives, and where lived and living experience can have decision making power.**

